

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'What workers were able to achieve with leadership they deserved'

Introduction by Jack Barnes to 'Rebelión Teamster' —PAGES 6-8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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U.S.-led NATO expands operations in Afghanistan

Washington probes role for imperialist alliance in Iraq

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, attending a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels, indicated December 1 that Washington has made progress in getting the imperialist military alliance to expand its role in the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld also pointed to the steps taken since NATO's summit in Prague a year ago to restructure the U.S.-dominated NATO alliance. These include the first moves to establish a "rapid response force" that can be deployed quickly to defend imperialist interests around the world.

At a subsequent meeting in Brussels of NATO foreign ministers, U.S. officials also sought to lay the basis for NATO to play a more direct role in supporting the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq. In an acknowledgment that Washington remains far from that goal, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell said the

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Getty Images/Chris Hondros

U.S. troops seize Iraqi man December 3 after raids in Samarra, central Iraq.

New showdown looms in Venezuela over referendum to recall Chávez

Tens of thousands march to mark fifth anniversary since his election

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

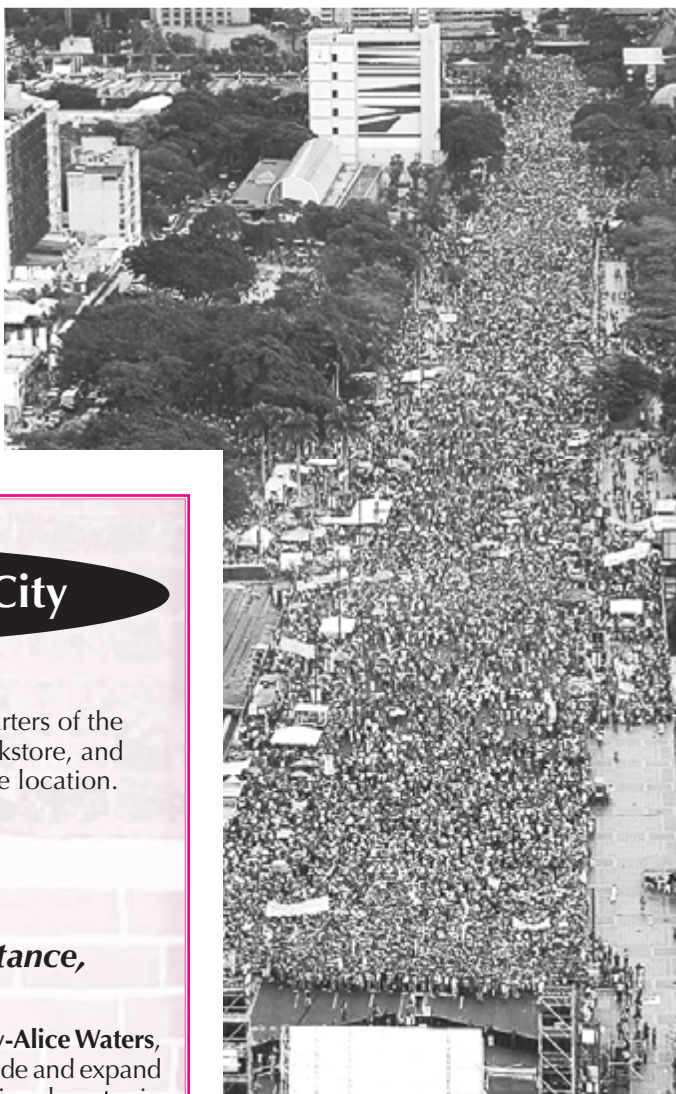
A new showdown between working people on the one hand, and the capitalists on the other, is shaping up in Venezuela over the U.S.-backed drive by the country's wealthy families to organize a referendum to bring down the government headed by President Hugo Chávez.

Tens of thousands of working people marched in downtown Caracas December 6 to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the election of Chávez to the presidency and oppose the latest attempt by the country's capitalist class to force his government out of office. The demonstration took place four days after the pro-imperialist

opposition completed a petitioning drive aimed at placing the recall referendum on the ballot early next year.

"There is no turning back on the road to the recall referendum," declared Antonio Ledezma, a spokesman for the opposition coalition Coordinadora Democrática, after petitioning ended the

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Tens of thousands rallied December 6 in downtown Caracas, Venezuela—after marching from Petarre, Catia, and other working-class neighborhoods—to mark five years of Chávez presidency and counter the drive by opposition coalition spearheaded by big business to oust the government through a referendum.

Utah miners build rally to win broader support for union fight

BY FRANK MILLER

HUNTINGTON, Utah—In a spirit of solidarity, six Co-Op miners drove to northern Salt Lake City, Utah, December 3 to stand shoulder to shoulder with members of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy workers union (PACE) in their fight for a just contract. With signs reading, "Co-Op Miners Joining Forces with PACE Workers," and "Co-Op Miners Support PACE Workers in their Struggle," the striking coal miners joined more than two dozen PACE Local 8-578 members at their informational picket line at the Holly Corp. refinery in Woods Cross, Utah. The refinery workers were protesting the company's attempt to do away with their benefit package. The miners were invited to two PACE local meetings that evening.

"Earlier today we joined your picket to let you know you can count on our support as well," Jeovani Sosa, a Co-Op miner, told refinery workers at the Local 8-578 meeting. "You are invited to our event in Huntington on December 13 for a rally organized by us and our families." Sosa and others said the

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Black farmers in U.S. South demand land, end to racist discrimination

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

RICHMOND, Virginia—More than 250 farmers and their supporters met here December 6 to discuss their fight against decades-long racist discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to prevent further land loss by farmers who are Black. The majority came from Virginia. Others came from as far away as Florida, Georgia, Iowa, and Kansas. Similar meetings in Albany, Georgia, and Montgomery, Alabama, were held in November.

Over the past four years, organizations

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Save the dates!

December 13–14 New York City

Saturday, December 13: RED SATURDAY

A full day of work to begin building the new national headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party, an expanded New York Pathfinder bookstore, and offices of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*—all in the same location.

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Poultry workers in Ontario walk out for better wages

BY ROSEMARY RAY

TORONTO—More than 1,000 members of UFCW Local 175 approved a new contract after a two-week strike at the Maple Lodge Farms chicken processing plant in Brampton, Ontario. The strike began on November 10 when workers rejected a company offer of a 30-cent per hour wage increase in each year of a three-year contract.

On the picket line, workers—who say they normally process 300,000 chickens a day—described the brutal pace of the production line and conditions they are subjected to on the job. In an interview in the local Brampton newspaper, one of the strikers, Patricio, said that as a chicken picker at the beginning of the line he has to lift 16 chickens a minute onto shackles. Pickets point out that many workers have developed repetitive motion injuries.

During the first week of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) strike, pickets stopped trucks and bosses from crossing the picket lines, but the company soon obtained a court injunction barring strikers from blocking or obstructing any person or vehicle from entering the plant.

The police ordered strikers' cars to be removed from the rural road alongside the plant, forcing the unionists to walk 30 minutes to get to the picket line. In response, the union rented a large van to shuttle strikers from their cars to the picket line.

A picket captain, Benita, said that a week into the walkout the strikers again rejected the company's "final offer," by a vote of 585 to 451. "I wasn't surprised by the vote results but management was," she said. "The vote shows the union is serious." Joa Vale, a chicken cutter at the plant, supported the vote because "it will force the company to come back to the bargaining table."

Teresa Basheco, who fills orders in the shipping department, said the company pressured workers to cross the picket line and return to work. She estimated that about 60 union members crossed the lines and worked on production lines alongside supervisors and administrative staff.

Strikers organized delegations to go to

Swiss Chalet and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants to ask customers not to eat Maple Lodge chickens during the strike. Union officials called on other UFCW locals to enforce the "hot cargo" clause in their contracts, which prohibits employers from using products coming from a struck plant.

Basheco reported that workers approved the new contract November 25 by a 2 to 1 margin. It includes a raise of 35 cents per hour the first two years of the pact, a 45-cent raise the third year, and medical benefits improvements. Picketing buses carrying scabs at a local flea market was a turning point, she said, "because the company realized that the strikers would continue to try and stop scabs from getting into the plant."

Rosemary Ray is a member of UFCW Local 175 at Maple Leaf Pork in Burlington, Ontario.

U.S. Congress passes change in overtime pay rules

BY RÓGER CALERO

U.S. Congress cleared the way November 21 for a bill that includes a Bush administration proposal to change rules protecting overtime work compensation.

The new rules were introduced as part of a 2004 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill. They allow the Department of Labor to redefine a section of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act that determines who must be paid a time-and-a-half hourly rate for working more than 40 hours per week.

The Bush administration promoted the new rules as an attempt to "simplify and update" work rules, which big-business groups claim only favor already "well-compensated" and highly skilled professionals.

Workers now cannot get overtime pay if they earn more than \$155 a week, or \$8,060 a year—the level set in 1975—and meet other convoluted job criteria such as spending at least 80 percent of their time "exercising discretion" and other "intellectual" tasks that can not be "standardized

British Columbia timber strikers hold the line



Militant/Natalie Stake-Doucet

International Woodworkers of America members picket Interfor mill in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, December 1. They are part of a strike by 10,000 timber workers, who have stopped much of the logging and milling along Canada's west coast. The workers are resisting a sweeping concession contract that the Forest Industry, a boss organization, tried to force them to accept in November.

in...a given period of time."

Under the new regulations, employees making more than \$22,100 a year could be denied overtime pay if their jobs are reclassified as professional or administrative, or who have supervisory or management-related responsibilities. Under the change, assistant managers of stores, restaurants or bars, for example, would get overtime pay despite their management status if they earn less than \$22,100 per year. At the same time, a broader range of professional or administrative personnel making more than this amount would be denied time-and-a-half.

According to the AFL-CIO web site, the number of workers who will lose overtime pay is nearly 8 million, far greater than the 644,000 the Bush administration claims the bill would affect.

Seeking to erode further the 40-hour workweek, capitalist politicians in Washington are also pursuing revisions to replace time-and-a-half pay with comp time, and to allow the bosses to pay overtime only after 80 hours over a two-week work period. Under federal rules already in place for many nonagricultural jobs and industries, overtime is paid only after 40 hours per week, rather than after eight hours per day.

Pathfinder a draw in Guadalajara

BY NICOLE SARMIENTO AND MARCEL MAILLOUX

GUADALAJARA, Mexico—"I've been looking for your stand," said Eduardo Rodríguez Covambias as he entered the Pathfinder booth at the annual Guadalajara International Book Fair, which opened here December 1. "At last year's fair I bought several of your books including the one on the Iraq war. They're radical and I agree with them. This year I'll be coming back to get the subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial*."

Rodríguez was one of several young workers and students who were repeat visitors to Pathfinder's bookstand. Two days earlier he had been part of a demonstration of several thousand in Guadalajara protesting the Mexican government's plans to open up the state-owned electrical industry to foreign capitalist investment and to add medicine, food, and books to items subject to an already unpopular value-added tax. In the days preceding the book fair, protests by union and peasant organizations were held

around the country, with 100,000 converging on Mexico City on November 27. (See article on page 12.)

The Guadalajara International Book Fair is one of the largest in the Americas. This year more than 1,400 book distributors and publishers are at the fair. As in previous years, it is expected to draw several hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Alejandro Hernández, another young man who visited the Pathfinder stand, said he had been part of a welcome in Guadalajara for a contingent of peasants from the southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas who had traveled on to Mexico City. Pointing to Pathfinder's books on the Cuban Revolution, he said, "I'm interested in the mass movement and particularly the peasant resistance in Mexico." He and his friends bought Pathfinder catalogs and said they would like to get some of these books into the hands of peasants and other militants they have met.

A cashier at the food stand near the Pathfinder

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THE MILITANT

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Granma/Ricardo López Hevia

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Venezuela clash

Continued from front page

night of December 2. The opposition claimed it gathered 3.6 million signatures it plans to turn into the country's National Elections Council (CEN) the second week of December—well over the 2.4 million required to trigger a recall vote.

The council has a month to review the signatures after they are filed. If it validates enough of them, the CEN is supposed to call a referendum the second quarter of next year on whether Chávez can remain president. In order to force Chávez out of office during such a referendum, more than the 3.7 million people who voted for him in 2000 must cast ballots demanding his ouster.

Soon after petitioning started on November 28, the government accused the opposition of massive fraud. Evidence presented included testimony by workers who said their employers coerced them into signing the opposition petition with the threat of losing their jobs; forged signatures of people who have died; and thug attacks on pro-government observers at polling stations.

On November 29, the second day of petitioning, the government partially closed Venezuela's 1,400-mile-long border with Colombia, alleging electoral fraud by Venezuelans living in that country. "We have selectively closed the frontier with Colombia," Venezuela's vice president, José Vicente Rangel, told reporters that day, according to Reuters. "We have detected irregularities in people crossing from the neighboring country with identity cards not included in the electoral register."

The opposition assailed the measure as an attempt to prevent Venezuelans in Colombia from crossing the border to join the four-day anti-Chávez signature drive.

After petitioning ended, the government said the opposition had come up short.

"They didn't even get 2 million signatures," Vice President Rangel said. The government also vowed to pursue through the National Elections Council a rigorous investigation of its charges that the opposition committed electoral fraud.

Chávez is "disrespecting millions of Venezuelans," countered Enrique Mendoza, the governor of Miranda state and a figure in the pro-imperialist opposition. "Don't do any more tricks to avoid a process that the majority of Venezuelans want," Mendoza warned.

Representatives of Washington and other capitalist governments who sent "observers" to back up the referendum effort were quick to side with the opposition.

"People have been able to sign," said César Gaviria, former president of Colombia and current secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS), "and the process has been democratic and as far as our observers have been able to see, clean." Gaviria is heading the international monitoring mission.

Spokespeople of the U.S.-based Carter Center, named after former U.S. president James Carter, joined in, saying they did not observe any irregularities.

Representatives of a six-nation "Group of Friends" backing the referendum process also welcomed the signature drive as "peaceful," according to Reuters. The six are the governments of Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, and the United States.

After Chávez accused Gaviria of being biased in favor of the opposition, the OAS official met with the Venezuelan president. Gaviria said after the meeting that it is up to the CEN to probe the fraud accusations. "We are sure the council will investigate fully and that when there is a result, all sides will accept it," the OAS secretary-general stated.

On December 3, the day after petitioning centers shut down, the metropolitan police in Caracas attacked pro-Chávez street vendors and others with tear gas. The cops triggered the clashes by trying to seize illegal fireworks. The police accused the demonstrators of throwing firecrackers, and alleged the protesters had caused a riot. The metropolitan government of the country's capital is run by Alfredo Peña,

standing together, by using the World Trade Organization," said UK trade minister Patricia Hewitt, "played our hand very, very effectively."

EU members would impose sanctions on \$4 billion in U.S. goods, said Lamy, if Washington does not drop the Foreign Sales Corporations (FSC) program. The FSC, adopted by Congress in 1984, grants tax breaks of up to 30 percent to companies that set up offices in other countries. Following EU complaints, the World Trade Organization ruled in 1999 that the FSC is an illegal export subsidy. Some European companies with U.S. subsidiaries, such as DaimlerChrysler and Siemens AG, also benefit from the current law.

The EU sanctions, originally announced in early November, target U.S.-manufactured jewelry, paper and pulp products, toys, and electrical machinery and parts. These tariffs would start at 5 percent in March 2004 and increase by 1 percent each month up to a limit of 17 percent by March 2005. The EU trade representative said he is following the same course adopted during the steel tariff dispute. "It's a basic lesson," said Lamy. "Union equals might and strength. It's why we are building Europe."

Pathfinder supporters in striking distance of book sales goal



Militant/Carlos Samaniego

Pathfinder books draw crowd September 21 at "New York is Book Country" fair in Manhattan.

BY DAVE PRINCE

NEW YORK—Supporters of the effort to increase Pathfinder sales by 10 percent in the last half of 2003 are within striking distance of making the international goal of selling a total \$240,000 of books for the year. As of the end of November the total stood at \$217,100.

Between September and November of this year, sales efforts have resulted in average monthly sales of \$22,400. This includes sales to Pathfinder bookstores, independent bookstores, and libraries around the world, and sales to individuals buying from Pathfinder's web site—Pathfinderpress.com. A slightly higher total of \$22,900 is needed in December to make the goal.

The month is off to a good start. Sales through the first week of December totaled \$3,000. That figure will be augmented by the income from the 520 books and pamphlets sold at the Guadalajara, Mexico, international book fair.

Sales tables in working-class areas, on campuses, at political events, and other special opportunities, as well as from Pathfinder bookstores, are at the heart of the plans campaigners are mapping out to put the effort over the goal.

Pathfinder bookstores in the United States will be building on a successful month in November when they sold \$9,885, just \$300 short of their goal for the month.

Pathfinder supporters around the world will be taking advantage of sales opportunities with independent bookstores and libraries. This effort will get a special boost from the initial orders for the English- and Spanish-language editions of the new Pathfinder title *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952–58*, by Armando Hart, as well as *Rebelión Teamster*, the Spanish-language edition of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs. These titles will be available next month.

Plans are also underway to promote Pathfinder books for Black History Month in February and Women's History Month in March. Many buyers place these orders in December and January.

an opposition leader. "It seems as though some people are trying to create disorder for some dark purposes," metropolitan police deputy director Orlando Gutierrez told Reuters.

After opposition leader Mendoza stated that Coordinadora Democrática would not tolerate "more tricks and maneuvers," Vice President Rangel questioned what the opposition would do if its bid to obtain a referendum failed. "Will they have another go at a coup?" he said.

Rangel was referring to the April 2002 U.S.-backed military coup attempt, which failed to oust the president due to massive mobilizations by working people that caused divisions in the armed forces. A similar effort to topple the Chávez government through a bosses' "strike" last December-January also faltered because of widespread resistance by workers and peasants. After these failures, opposition forces have refocused their efforts on organizing a referendum to recall the president.

In response, the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), Chávez's party, pushed for recall referendums against nearly 40 National Assembly deputies and other opposition politicians. During petitioning November 21–24, the MVR claimed to have collected more than enough signatures to place recall referendums against all these opposition figures on the ballot next year.

Chávez has drawn the wrath of the U.S. government and its backers in Venezuela for taking measures that cut into the prerogatives of big capital, including an agrarian reform law and a bill strengthening state control over the country's oil, gas, and other mineral resources that are part of Venezuela's national patrimony. The U.S. government has been irked by Chávez's public criticisms of the U.S.-led invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Washington's hostility has also been fueled by closer economic and political ties between Venezuela and Cuba. These have included collaboration on the country's nationwide literacy campaign launched last June and a program that has brought nearly 2,000 Cuban volunteer doctors operating free neighborhood clinics in many of the country's poorest working-class neighborhoods.

In another sign of this cooperation, well-

known Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez performed alongside Venezuelan artists during the December 6 pro-Chávez rally. On the way to downtown Caracas, thousands of protesters took over Altamira square for a time, and demanded the government prosecute former military officers and others who have taken part in previous attempts to topple the president. Former army officers dismissed for their role in the April 2002 coup and other opposition figures have been using the square for some time for anti-government protests.

Working people, who have been the main obstacle to the designs of Washington and its backers in Venezuela to get rid of a president popular among the toilers, are mobilizing once again to push back the bosses' latest plans. In addition to the December 6 march in Caracas, activities took place in Carabobo, Miranda, and other states to assail what protesters described as fraud in the opposition signature drive.

Further reading from Pathfinder

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Guadalajara

Continued from Page 2

finder booth commented to booth volunteers that the Pathfinder stand was almost always crowded.

Juan Antonio Atilano Montes, a student at the University of Guadalajara, was one of more than 30 people who bought *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* in the first two days of the fair. "I've already got books about Che but written by others," he said, referring to Ernesto Che Guevara, who was a central leader of the Cuban Revolution. "What I really want is to read his views, his speeches."

Volunteers at the Pathfinder booth sold 113 books and pamphlets on the first day, mostly in Spanish. Other top sellers included *The Second Declaration of Havana* and *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*. Also popular were several issues of the Marxist magazine *Nueva Internacional*, including those titled "The Opening Guns of World War III" and "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War."

European Union threatens to retaliate against U.S. trade subsidies

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The White House decision December 4 to rescind tariffs on steel imported into the United States did nothing to relax trade tensions between Washington and its imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan. The following day, European Union (EU) trade commissioner Pascal Lamy reaffirmed a March 1, 2004, deadline for the U.S. government to cancel tax breaks for U.S. companies with offshore operations.

U.S. president George Bush withdrew the steel tariffs more than a year ahead of schedule in the face of an EU threat to impose sanctions on \$2.2 billion worth of U.S. goods. In dropping the tariffs, Bush stated they had already accomplished their purpose in boosting the profits of U.S. steel companies and their competitiveness against their rivals. At the same time, he announced a plan to monitor the growth of steel imports into the United States.

The EU trade commissioner told the *New York Times* that Bush's decision to back down demonstrated that Europe "punches its weight." Capitalists in the United Kingdom, who tout their "special relationship" with Washington, did not hesitate in joining in the victory lap. "We in Europe, by

Rumsfeld lauds Georgia’s aid to ‘war on terror’

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld visited the former Soviet republic of Georgia December 5 to solidify ties with its new government under acting president Nino Burdzhnadze. He expressed his “appreciation for Georgia’s critical assistance in the global war on terror” in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as for the deployment of Georgian Special Forces to “serve alongside coalition troops” in the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq.

On a tour of a U.S.-sponsored military training facility, Rumsfeld noted Washington’s interest in the possibility of deploying additional forces in Georgia, including a “mechanized element.” U.S. Special Forces and Marines are completing a two-year Georgia Train and Equip program for the Georgian military at the center.

In the name of supporting the republic’s “territorial integrity,” Rumsfeld also stated that Washington agrees with the Georgian government that “Russia should fulfill its obligations under the [1999] Istanbul Accords” and withdraw its 3,300 troops stationed in the republic.

The massive protests on the streets of Georgia that forced the November 23 resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze highlighted the continuing crisis of governments attempting to introduce capitalist relations into the workers states of the region. Facing a revolt that culminated in the November 22 storming of the parliament building, the former Soviet foreign minister decided the next day to leave office because the crowds in the streets “were not afraid of anything.”

Shevardnadze, the elected president of the republic since 1995, has long promoted a return to capitalist economic relations within Georgia, while collaborating in the construction of oil and gas pipelines as an “energy corridor” for U.S. imperialism. Working people in Georgia have faced devastating economic conditions since the republic became independent in April 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Workers have resisted government moves to make them pay for the consequences of

the economic crisis. Unemployment stands at 20 percent today, and retirees receive a pension of only \$6–7 per month. Inflation in the early 1990s reached as high as 15,000 percent, wiping out the value of wages and whatever savings workers may have had.

At the center of popular outrage has been the government’s efforts to force workers and farmers to pay for electricity use. While the administration in Tbilisi, the capital, has worked overtime to secure contracts with U.S. and European companies to build oil and gas pipelines across its territory, energy supplies must be imported to cover one-half of the country’s needs. The principal suppliers, Russia and Turkmenistan, cut off gas supplies to Georgia for a period in 1997 when its government stopped paying the bills. At the same time, Shevardnadze earned the hatred of workers and farmers for trying to force them to pay for the use of electricity that is basic to their survival.

The government set on a course to privatize the energy industry. It took the first steps toward privatization of the distribution of energy in 1998, but has fallen short of its objective of selling off control of the state energy generation system by 2000. Long power outages have been a daily reality across the country, and parts of Georgia are not provided with any power at all. This has sparked continuing protests—in November 2000 demonstrations in Tbilisi brought the capital to a standstill. The shortages and protests continued in early 2001.

Last summer Shevardnadze gave approval to the cutoff of electricity to 23 of the nation’s provinces. The Energy Distributing Company of Georgia, run now by P.A. Consulting, a U.S. company, switched off the power to non-paying regions in August. Shevardnadze announced, “The population must learn to pay for electricity.” Adopting



Reuters/Gleb Garanich

Supporters of opposition in republic of Georgia celebrate November 22 outside parliament in Tbilisi. In face of these protests, the country’s president, Eduard Shevardnadze, resigned the next day.

this measure, he said, “is the only way for the country to exist and develop.” In response to such company/government actions, the *Washington Post* reported, “in one region, the governor and his guards stormed a substation and flipped the power back on. A mayor in another area did the same, whipping out a gun and shooting a transmission insulator to prove he meant business.”

Popular anger at the government boiled over after the November 2 parliamentary elections as opposition parties mounted a convincing campaign among Georgia’s population accusing the Shevardnadze government of rigging the vote. U.S. ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles described the elections as “marred by massive irregularities and voter fraud.” Washington has provided Tbilisi with more than \$1 billion in aid the last decade. Only Israel received U.S. financial backing at a higher per capita rate. Official election results, not announced until nearly three weeks after the vote, gave a majority in parliament to parties backing the president.

Protests against Shevardnadze began al-

most immediately after the election. When demonstrators took control of the parliament building November 22, Shevardnadze declared a 30-day state of emergency. “Order will be restored,” he claimed, “and the criminals will be punished.” By that time, however, military units had joined the demonstrations outside the occupied parliament building and their commanders were pledging support to the opposition forces.

Shevardnadze resigned the next day. “I looked at the huge crowd,” he said later. “I saw in their faces it would be impossible to calm them, that they were not afraid of anything.”

Opposition parties and those at the head of the interim administration are as pro-capitalist as Shevardnadze. Opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili, a U.S.-trained lawyer who was originally groomed for office by Shevardnadze, promised that no action would be taken against the former president. He announced an end to the protests, and said “People should go home.” Elections for a new president are set for January 4.

— CALENDAR —

NEW YORK

Manhattan

U.S. Navy Out of Vieques and All of Puerto Rico: Celebrate New Year’s Eve in Solidarity with Vieques Wed., Dec. 31, 8:00 p.m. *Taino Towers Lower Level Ballroom, 240 E. 123 St., off 2nd Ave. Tel: (212) 348-8004, (212) 426-7552. Sponsors: Todo El Barrio Con Vieques, East Harlem Pilot Block, Todo Nueva York Con Vieques.*

ProLibertad Freedom Campaign Holiday Party Sat., Dec. 13, 7:00 p.m. *The Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St. 10th Floor (between 6–7th Avenues) Tel: (718) 601-4751. Includes holiday auction for Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Commissary Fund.*

— MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

ALABAMA

Birmingham

From Southern Africa to the Sahara: How Imperialism Plundered Africa Speaker: Clay Dennison, Socialist Workers Party. Sun., Dec. 21. Program 4:00 p.m. *3029-A Bessemer Road (1/2 mile east of the Alabama State Fair grounds and across the street from U-Haul) Donation: \$4 Tel: (205) 780-0021.*

NEW JERSEY

Newark

Working-class Resistance to the “War on Terrorism” and the Assault on Workers’ Rights Fri., Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m. *168 Bloomfield Ave. 2nd Floor Donation: \$5 program. Tel: (973) 481-0077.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

The Fight for Independence in Western Sahara Speaker: Paul Pederson, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Dec. 20. Dinner 6:30 p.m., Program 7:30 p.m. *545 8th Ave., 14th Floor. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. Tel: (212) 695-7358.*

Washington presses for NATO role in Iraq

Continued from front page

immediate focus of their efforts was on NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld noted that NATO, in its first-ever military operation outside Europe, has taken over command of a contingent of 5,500 troops based in Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital. A separate U.S.-led force of 11,500 troops has been operating in other parts of the country.

In a further step, the U.S. defense secretary emphasized, NATO is now moving to expand its operations outside Kabul to several provincial cities, closer to areas of potential combat. Rumsfeld said that the ministerial meeting “also discussed the possibility that NATO might take over military operations in Afghanistan some time in the future.”

German troops have already been leading a military contingent, known as a “Provincial Reconstruction Team,” in the northern town of Kunduz. NATO officials reported there are now five other such units, composed of U.S., British, and New Zealand troops.

Rumsfeld stated that, apart from Washington, the imperialist forces currently in Afghanistan—particularly those from “old Europe,” a term coined by U.S. officials during the war on Iraq this year to refer to the French-German bloc in the European Union—have not yet provided adequate military equipment such as helicopters to conduct effective operations beyond Kabul.

The U.S. secretary of defense said that since the NATO summit in Prague a year ago, several steps have been taken to restructure NATO along the lines that Washington has been advocating. He highlighted the establishment of the new rapid-response force, which would reinforce the need “to transform the militaries” of NATO members and demonstrate “the importance of agil-

ity and the importance of speed and being capable of being deployed,” as he put it in a November 30 press conference.

On December 1, Rumsfeld said, “NATO stood up the initial rotation of its new Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Battalion.”

At the December 4 Brussels meeting of foreign ministers, U.S. officials urged NATO to consider taking a more direct role to support the U.S.-dominated occupation force in Iraq. As an initial step, Powell suggested NATO eventually take over the command of a division of forces in south-central Iraq currently under Polish command. NATO’s involvement so far has been limited to providing logistical support to the division, which has 9,500 troops from 17 countries, including 2,500 from Poland.

“Not one single NATO member here today—or seven countries due to join next year—spoke against the possibility of an expanded role for NATO in Iraq,” Powell told reporters after the meeting. “And that includes...France and Germany,” he said, when asked if those two governments had raised objections.

Powell’s comments were a tacit admission that Washington has made little progress in getting NATO to commit troops to Iraq. That will not happen without agreement from Paris and Berlin, which have said they would do so only under a United Nations-sponsored command.

While the French government is not part of NATO’s military command, it has the second-largest contingent in NATO’s new rapid-response force.

Berlin and Paris have urged a quicker transfer of formal power to a regime that gives the appearance of being run by Iraqis. U.S. officials hope objections by Paris and Berlin “will soften,” an article in the *Los Angeles Times* said, when Washington sets

up a new “transitional” government later in 2004 to give the occupation more of an Iraqi face and boost its popular acceptance.

Before the invasion of Iraq nine months ago, the German and French governments, defending their own lucrative trade relations and investments in that country, had been critical of how Washington was leading the drive toward war there.

In Brussels, the European ministers also continued their discussions on plans for a common defense policy in time for the mid-December drafting of a European Union (EU) constitution, including an EU military arm. Berlin and Paris have argued for a EU military wing of NATO.

Powell said he applauded efforts by European governments to increase their military capability but warned that the EU military arm must not undermine NATO. “The United States cannot accept independent EU structures that duplicate existing NATO capabilities,” he said.

At a European security conference in the Netherlands, Powell insisted that such a force should be deployed only where NATO “for one reason or another” is unwilling to take on a military intervention.

At a December 2 roundtable with European editors in Brussels, Rumsfeld was asked his opinion on the possible dispute between the U.S.-led NATO and the Franco-German initiative for an EU military force. The defense secretary said the answer is “above my pay grade at this stage in time,” implying that the brewing conflict will be dealt with at the head-of-state level.

During a December 8 meeting in Brussels, the European Union failed to reach agreement on a mutual defense clause for an EU constitution that was to be debated at a European Union summit later that week. The governments of Austria, Finland, Ire-

Continued on page 10

Black farmers meet

Continued from front page

of Black farmers have held gatherings like these in several southern states to press for implementation of a 1999 consent decree between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and farmers who had filed a class-action lawsuit against the government. By signing the decree in *Pigford v. Glickman* and settling the suit out of court, the government admitted to a pattern of racist discrimination by the USDA and its field offices in rural counties in processing loans and providing other services to farmers. At the same time, Washington tried to defuse the farmers' struggle for land, which had assumed significant proportions at the end of the 1990s.

When a U.S. district judge approved the consent decree on April 14, 1999, farmers were told that if they met minimal requirements for proving discrimination they would receive \$50,000 tax-free from the government. Four and a half years later, only 13,000 of the 22,000 eligible farmers have received payment of any kind.

"We are going to keep the struggle going," said James Lyle, a hog farmer from Pamplin, Virginia, and an activist in the Black Farmers and Agriculturists Association, Inc. (BFAA, Inc.), which organized the Richmond meeting. "It has always been a struggle. We thought that *Pigford v. Glickman* would solve all the problems. We thought justice would come from the Justice Department. We took our attorneys at face value. We thought everyone had our best interests at heart—but we bought a bill of goods. So we just keep fighting—no promise other than that."

"The USDA admitted discrimination—but farmers did not get relief," said Thomas Burrell, national president of BFAA, Inc. "This was supposed to be our '40 acres and a mule.' But they put you and me behind the mule instead. Whether you were paid in the lawsuit, were turned down, filed late, or were folk who did not know there was a lawsuit until now—it doesn't matter. We are all on the same train and it has been derailed. Ask yourself this—since April 14, 1999, have you experienced discrimination? Can you get an operating loan today? Can you plant your crops? Can you farm?"

The number of Black farmers in the United States fell from 900,000 in 1920 to 18,000 in 1998, shortly before the consent decree was issued. In 1992, Blacks owned 1 percent of the country's farmland—down from 14 percent in 1920.

Burrell said that BFAA, Inc. is signing up thousands of farmers to fill out a questionnaire and petition to document that the consent decree and its implementation did not give redress to the discrimination and lack of dignity that farmers are fighting against. He explained that the statute of limitations on the settlement expires in April 2004. "We need to convince a federal judge to

stop the clock."

The 45-point questionnaire seeks to determine whether the USDA is trying to foreclose or will foreclose if a farmer does not prevail in the lawsuit; whether a farmer's claim was denied because he or she "failed" to name a similarly situated white farmer who did receive loans or other assistance; if the FBI harassed farmers involved in the lawsuit, and if payments were made to the farmer or to the Internal Revenue Service.

Another issue the questionnaire takes up is injunctive relief. Under the terms of the settlement, farmers were promised preferential treatment for one direct operating loan and for one loan to buy farmland at any time up to five years after the settlement date. According to Richard Howell, co-counsel of BFAA, Inc., there are no cases where the USDA carried out this provision.

Perry Roberts, a hog farmer and leader of the Southside Black Farmers Association of Emporia, Virginia, learned about the meeting from his wife who read about it in a local newspaper. He and a fellow member of the organization left the gathering with a stack of questionnaires to distribute to the 30 farmers in their group. Roberts said he was one of three farmers in his area to receive the settlement. "But it didn't help," he said. "It put me in another tax bracket and meant



Militant/Nancy Boyasko

Black farmers met December 6 in Richmond, Virginia, to discuss their fight against longstanding racist discrimination by the USDA and to resist further land loss.

I had to pay \$5,000 more in taxes."

Aldon Jarrett, from Mount Dora, Florida, was forced to sell his 20-acre chicken farm to survive. "Now it's a golf course," he stated. According to Jarrett, farmers are experiencing increased foreclosures. "Two weeks ago, a young Black farmer from Oakley, Kansas, with a 2,400-acre farm was foreclosed on," he said. "But it is not just Black farmers. All small farmers are hurting. In fact, everyone who needs gov-

ernmental relief is under attack. The U.S. government is going after social security, Medicare, and everything else that they can identify as funds that are for us."

BFAA, Inc. will be organizing similar meetings in January in Sumter, South Carolina, and Monroe, Louisiana.

Willie Cotton from Atlanta and Nancy Boyasko from Washington, D.C., contributed to this article.

N.Y. protesters: 'Justice for Vieques 12, free all Puerto Rican political prisoners!'

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

NEW YORK—More than 50 people participated in a picket line at the United Nations December 4 to demand justice for 12 activists from Vieques. Five of the twelve were being sentenced in a federal court in San Juan that day on charges ranging from trespassing to destruction of federal property.

The charges stem from a May 1 celebration of the U.S. Navy's departure from the Puerto Rican island. That night, hundreds of residents of the island and mainland Puerto Rico entered the grounds of the abandoned Camp García to celebrate the Navy's departure from Vieques. This victory was years in the making following a sustained campaign in Puerto Rico, the United States, and internationally to force the Navy out of Vieques.

The picket line at the UN was called by ProLibertad, an organization involved in the fight to free Puerto Rican political prisoners, and the Vieques Support Campaign, and was endorsed by other organizations in the New York area and Puerto Rico.

The protesters—several carrying huge Puerto Rican flags, and the flag of Vieques—were in high spirits as they chanted,

"Free the Vieques 12! Free all Puerto Rican political prisoners!" and "U.S. Navy: decontaminate and clean up Vieques!"

The latter refers to the continuing fight by residents of Vieques, and their supporters worldwide, to demand Washington pay for a major clean-up and decontamination of the island. After driving residents off their land, the U.S. Navy occupied two-thirds of Vieques for more than six decades and used it for artillery and bombing practice, along with military maneuvers.

A brief rally was held to update participants on the sentencing. Frank Velgara, a leader of the Vieques Support Campaign, read an e-mail message from supporters of the Vieques 12 who had attended the sentencing hearing in San Juan.

Velgara reported that Judge José Fusté of the U.S. District Court in Puerto Rico earlier that day sentenced five of the twelve who had entered a guilty plea on advice of their counsel.

Nilda Medina, of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, was sentenced to one year's probation, 200 hours of community work, and fined \$2,000; Jesús Delgado, former president of the Teachers Federation in Puerto Rico,

got 24 months probation, nine of which he is ordered to serve under house arrest, and was fined \$3,000; Néstor de Jesús Guishard, a young Vieques activist, was sentenced to eight months in prison and a year probation; Heriberto Hernández was sentenced to four months in prison, two years on conditional release, and fined \$3,000; Manuel Pérez Santiago was sentenced to 12 months on probation and fined \$3,000.

"We are here today to call upon the nations of the world to speak out and denounce U.S. colonial control of Puerto Rico and the repressive measures that the United States undertakes to repress people fighting for freedom and self-determination," said Ben Ramos, ProLibertad youth coordinator. Ramos gave an update on the long-term fight to win freedom for all Puerto Rican patriots held in U.S. prisons, and pointed to the Vieques 12 as the latest in a long list of Puerto Rican activists that Washington has jailed for the crime of fighting against U.S. colonial domination.

Ramos called on those gathered to step up efforts to win unconditional release for five *independentistas* currently serving long sentences in U.S. prisons: Oscar López Rivera, Juan Segarra Palmer, Haydée Beltrán, Carlos Alberto Torres, and Antonio Camacho Negrón. Two others, José Pérez González and José Vélez Acosta, are held in federal prison in Puerto Rico as a result of the May 1 actions in Vieques. He announced that ProLibertad and other organizations are launching an international campaign to win the unconditional release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners and bring the issues of the military presence in Vieques and Puerto Rico's colonial status to the UN General Assembly and other international forums. The goal of this campaign, he said, is to win international solidarity for freeing the Puerto Rican patriots from prison and for the independence of Puerto Rico.

ProLibertad has joined the Human Rights Committee of Puerto Rico and the National Boricua Human Rights Network to demand prison authorities schedule surgery for Oscar López, who suffers from bilateral hernias and has been denied treatment for eight months. Ramos reported that the campaign has forced prison authorities to at least say such surgery will be provided, but additional protests to the Bureau of Prisons are needed to force them to schedule the operation immediately. Ramos also reported on the effort to pressure prison authorities to allow Carlos Alberto Torres's mother, Alejandrina, to visit him. Alejandrina Torres, who herself served many years in Washington's jails for her opposition to U.S. colonial rule, has been denied visitation rights.

Letters of protest should be sent to Harley G. Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 320 First Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20534; fax (202) 514-6878.

Black man dies after blows by Cincinnati cops

BY ROMINA GREEN

CINCINNATI, Ohio—The death of Nathaniel Jones following a November 30 beating by cops, who struck him repeatedly with their nightsticks, has sparked controversy and protest here. Some 500 people attended a memorial event on December 6, reflecting the anger at Jones's death among working people who are Black. One hundred took part in a protest rally the next day.

The beating administered by the cops was partially captured by their own video camera. According to channelcincinnati.com, the videotape shows "the first two officers to arrive, Baron Osterman and James Pike...striking Jones after he ignored orders to stay back. The videotape showed the 350-pound Jones taking a swing at an officer and putting his arm around an officer's neck."

By the same account, the two cops "knocked Jones to the ground and fell on him. Jones was struck with nightsticks at least a dozen times as the officers yelled, 'Put your hands behind your back!'" Eventually six cops were on the scene.

The 41-year-old Black man died later at University Hospital. On December 3 Hamilton County coroner Carl Parrott ruled his death a homicide, adding that the decision "should not be interpreted as implying inappropriate behavior or the use of excessive

force by police." Parrott said that Jones was overweight and had taken cocaine and PCP hours before his death, on top of methanol already in his system.

"They talk about Skip [Jones] like he was an animal," said Nathaniel Jones's grandmother, Bessie Jones. "He wasn't. Skipper was just a good old, fat jolly fella. He wasn't violent."

On December 5 cops from across the city gathered at the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) headquarters to show support for the policemen involved. "Nathaniel Jones chose to ingest crack cocaine," said FOP president Roger Webster. "He chose to ingest PCP. He chose to ingest embalming fluid. He chose to attack the cops."

The Jones family's lawyer, Ken Lawson, said that the FOP's stance "underlines why the community is upset. They don't care about human life."

Voices of protest were raised as news of Jones's death was circulated, along with shots from the videotape. His family said they would seek an independent inquiry. Both the National Urban League and NAACP called for a federal civil rights investigation.

"We are concerned about what seemed like excessive force," said Rev. Calvin Harper, president of the Baptist Ministers Conference of Greater Cincinnati and Vicinity, on December 2. "We also are

concerned that there seems to be a rush to exonerate the police and an attempt to assassinate the character of Nathaniel Jones before all of the facts are in." He urged attendance at a rally on December 7 to show "unity and concern."

Two days before the planned action, however, the Baptist Ministers Conference announced that they were calling off the rally.

"The organizers reached that decision after hearing the family talk about their hurt and their desire that everyone love one another," said Rev. Gregory Chandler, "and that there be no uprising or violence in the city." In April 2001 working people mobilized in several days of protests following the fatal police shooting of 19-year-old Timothy Thomas—the 15th Black person killed by the city's police from 1995 to that point. The cops fired rubber bullets, metal-filled beanbags, and tear gas at the protesters, and arrested 66.

Around 100 people attended a protest organized by the New Black Panther Party on the day of the cancelled rally. "I am here because I am sick and tired of the killing and beating of Black men," said Michael Riley, 55.

"I don't feel any legislation is going to give justice," said Julie Frances, 25, a student at North Kentucky University. "It has to be people coming out opposing racist killings."

‘The story of what workers achieved with lea

Introduction to Spanish-language edition of ‘Teamster Rebellion’ by S

Printed below is the introduction by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes to *Rebelión Teamster*, the Spanish-language edition of *Teamster Rebellion*, which will be available in late January. It is copyright © 2003 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

It was graveyard shift on the picket line near the entrance to the Co-Op coal mine outside Huntington, Utah. In mid-October, nights are already cold in the mountains. The icy blasts of wind through Bear Canyon cut to the bone. The locked-out workers had tied down their picket shack, made of plywood and blue tarp, to keep it from taking flight. Inside, seven or eight miners—most in their twenties, plus a couple of old-timers, including a woman and a veteran in his fifties, almost all from the state of Sinaloa in Mexico—huddled around the wood stove, donated by a retired union miner from nearby East Carbon.

A month earlier the company had fired seventy-four miners for protesting the suspension of a fellow worker and union supporter who had refused to sign a disciplinary warning. Acting to crush the miners’ effort to organize to win recognition of the United Mine Workers of America, management then locked them out.

One of the miners in the picket shack was a Nicaraguan immigrant who worked in the Deserado mine in Western Colorado, several hours away. He had gotten union time off to come over and help out. Before leaving home, he had stuck in his pocket a well-worn copy of *Teamster Rebellion*, the story of a bloody, hard-fought union organizing battle that took place almost seventy years ago in Minnesota, carried out by workers many of whom were Scandinavian in origin—Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, or Danish—with a substantial mixture of Irish. The author, Farrell Dobbs, whose forebears came from Ireland, had become the youngest leader of that strike. Like so many others facing Depression conditions in the early 1930s, Farrell had been struggling to find steady work, feed his family, and pay the rent.

The Nicaraguan miner, Francisco, began reading a few of the opening pages aloud, sight translating into Spanish as he went. The paragraphs described the working and living conditions and wages in the Midwest at the depth of the Depression. Amid expressions of surprise and sympathy, the strikers asked for more of the story, and soon were listening to other passages, page after page. The account was interrupted only to check the occasional late-night car going by, or to replenish firewood and survey the area outside.

Above all, the men and women from Sinaloa, trying to make their lives in



Above, picket line by locked-out coal miners at Co-Op mine near Huntington, Utah, in November. Right, inside Utah miners’ picket shack earlier in their struggle in October.



Militant/Anne Carrol

the mountains of Utah, identified with the individual struggles of the men and women of *Teamster Rebellion*. Dobbs’s description in the book’s early pages of how his family lost their entire winter’s stock of canned vegetables and fruits one night when the weather suddenly dropped below freezing and they didn’t make it home in time to move the jars indoors elicited expressions of sympathy and understanding of what that blow must have meant for Farrell, his wife Marvel, and their children.

The photos of strikers battling the cops and bosses’ deputies, of the large, disciplined funeral cortege for one of the pickets gunned down in cold blood by the cops, of strike leaders being hauled away to jail by the National Guard—all were looked at with interest. When the miners learned that inside the Teamster strike headquarters they were seeing in the photos there was a round-the-clock commissary for meals and a hospital to treat the wounded, interest grew. And after discovering from Dobbs’s narrative how the drivers organized in the Minneapolis market square to beat back the cop and employer assaults—with courage, discipline, and above all a detailed battle plan—and went on to win the strike for union recognition, the pictures were studied with even more attention.

No proletarian scene could better underscore the value of the publication in Spanish of *Rebelión Teamster*, some thirty-two years after it first appeared in English.

It is possible that among the striking Minneapolis Teamsters who laid the foundations for the transformation of the labor movement throughout the entire Mid-

west in the 1930s there was not a single worker who had been born in Mexico. (What a change a few decades have wrought!) But across the span of years, nationalities, languages, and lifetime experiences, the story told in *Teamster Rebellion* also belongs to the growing ranks of Spanish-speaking workers in the United States today as they enter into struggle. They can see themselves in those earlier generations of workers—many of them likewise first- or second-generation immigrants—who finally said “enough,” and began to take their own future in hand.

* * *

Teamster Rebellion is a book that stands on its own. It tells a hell of a story. It is at the same time an introduction to Farrell Dobbs, the worker in his twenties who emerged in the course of those battles as a leader of his class.

He was twenty-five years old, with two children to support, when he turned his back on a secure and well-remunerated future as part of the supervisory personnel of Western Electric working out of Omaha, Nebraska. He was repelled by the horror of the person he would have to become, by the class values and attitudes he would have to adopt, if he sold his soul to stay in such a job. Without a backward glance, he unconditionally cut himself “adrift” from alien classes, as the Communist Manifesto puts it, and “joined the revolutionary class” in the fullest sense of the word. The “miserable halfness” of the

petty-bourgeois spirit was the class attribute Dobbs came most to despise.

He quickly found himself in the ranks of the “great army of the unemployed.” Shoveling coal a couple of years later in a miserable Minneapolis coal yard, he met Grant Dunne, a seasoned cadre of the Communist League of America, the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party, who enlisted him in a union organizing drive. The story unfolds from there through the pages of *Teamster Rebellion* and the subsequent volumes, *Teamster Power*, *Teamster Politics*, and *Teamster Bureaucracy*, as well as numerous pamphlets, booklets, and the two volumes of *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the U.S.* that Dobbs was to live to complete in the early

1980s: *The Early Years, 1848-1917*, and *Birth of the Communist Movement, 1918-1922*.

As his political awakening unfolded, Dobbs became a citizen of the world, a proletarian internationalist, living the present as part of history—apart from which communism does not exist. He describes the impact on him of pictures in the Omaha newspapers of Imperial Japan’s 1931 invasion of China. The photos showed scenes of

U.S. troops stationed in Shanghai protecting, with Tokyo’s assent, the wealthy “international settlement,” while nearby Chinese working-class districts, with a casual racist nod from the U.S. army brass, were devastated, often burned to the ground, and their inhabitants slaughtered by the Japanese imperialist forces.

In describing his developing class consciousness, Dobbs gives the news photos of those events a weight similar to the impact on him of being asked by his bosses to go along with the firing of a fellow worker a few months short of retirement and a pension, in order to cut costs and increase “productivity.” In the later volumes of the Teamster series, we see the newspaper of the Teamsters Joint Council in Minneapolis, the *Northwest Organizer*, carrying lead editorials demanding the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Asia and the Pacific and condemning preparations by the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt for the great imperialist slaughter of World War II.

The young Farrell Dobbs we get to know in the pages of *Teamster Rebellion* became one of the great mass organizers of the U.S. working class. Barely thirty, he was the chief architect and leader of the campaign—stretching from Texas, to Detroit, to Canada, to Seattle—that organized some quarter million over-the-road drivers into a powerful union and transformed the upper Midwest into union territory, the legacy of which is felt to this day.



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

In the “Battle of Deputies Run” May 21–22, 1934, hundreds of workers routed the cops and company-organized thugs in the Minneapolis market district.



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

Bloody Friday, July 20, 1934. “Suddenly, without any warning, the cops opened fire on the picket truck, and they shot to kill. In a matter of seconds, two of the pickets lay motionless on the floor of the bullet-ridden truck.” Above, funeral procession four days later for Henry Ness. A second striker, John Belor, died later of his wounds.

Leadership they deserved'

WP national secretary Jack Barnes

The leading cadre of General Drivers Local 574 (later Teamsters Local 544) became the class-struggle left-wing of a much broader militant labor leadership. They showed in practice how the unions, equipped with such leadership, can and will be transformed into instruments of revolutionary struggle capable of leading growing layers of workers, employed and unemployed, and their allies—farmers, devastated small producers—to political independence from the ruling class. They showed how class-conscious union militants begin to recognize themselves as part of an international class whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of their own bosses and the bosses' government. And to rest easy in the history they are a living part of.

Dobbs more than anyone, however, knew that what he was accomplishing was possible only because he was part of the broad leadership cadre of the communist party founded in 1919 to do in the United States what the Bolsheviks had just done in Russia, the party that in 1938 took the name Socialist Workers Party. By 1940, with World War II fast approaching, reaction was growing in the trade union officialdom, the ranks were being prepared for war, and the prospect of further political progress either in the Teamsters or the wider industrial union movement had been virtually eliminated for the time being. In January of that year, Dobbs resigned his post as general organizer for the Teamsters international. He did so to become labor and organization secretary of a party whose membership, under the impact of the labor movement's retreat and the petty bourgeoisie's capitulation to patriotic hysteria, would soon drop well below 1,000. The next year the leadership of that party that would not bend to war pressures and many cadres of Local 544's

and counsel to the younger party cadres who, in the latter seventies, led a turn to the unions as new struggles and openings developed, beginning in the coal mines and steel plants especially, and organized the party to respond as proletarian internationalists to triumphant revolutions in Nicaragua, Grenada, and Iran.

From World War II, to Korea, to Vietnam, Dobbs oriented the movement to reach toward our fellow workers in uniform, the GIs, those U.S. residents who pay the highest price of all for Washington's unending quest for world dominance. And he helped politically arm communist workers and youth to unflinchingly recognize the inevitable necessity of organizing to combat and defeat intensified state repression, forms of military rule, and capitalist-sponsored fascist gangs as the imperialist order in the United States—through unknown twists and turns, and over a duration impossible to predict—once again entered into a period of world crisis comparable to that of 1914 through World War II. "To the members of Local 544's union defense guard," reads his dedication to the third volume of the series, *Teamster Politics*.

Dobbs often pointed to the special contribution to the labor movement made by veterans of the armed forces. An example among the militants we meet in *Rebelión Teamster* is Ray Rainbolt, one of several field organizers of the cruising pickets during the 1934 strikes, later elected by members of Local 544's 600-strong union defense guard to serve as their commander. For workers in the mid-1930s to choose a Sioux Indian to lead them in combat—to issue them orders, to discipline them if necessary—was far, far from an everyday occurrence in this country, especially in the Upper Midwest or western United States. The standing Rainbolt achieved among the

ranks of fighting workers is a demonstration of the depth of the changes in political attitudes, battle discipline, and human solidarity forged in the course of the class combat described in Dobbs's Teamster books.

In a 1966 talk, presented to an audience predominantly composed of members of the Young Socialist Alliance, Farrell Dobbs summed up the world historical view that best describes his lifetime political course; the class characteristics indispensable for any proletarian revolutionist; and what the working class demands of its leaders, above all.

We must be constantly aware of the key role of the United States in the world. United States imperialism is today the powerhouse of world reaction, as the war in Vietnam is abundantly demonstrating.

It is an iron fact that until capitalism is overturned here in the United States of America, the gang of imperialist mad dogs that rule this country are going to remain a mortal threat to all humanity. We must never forget that.

That means the showdown battle for world socialism is going to be fought right here in the United States of America. And when the revolutionary victory is won, outlived, decadent capitalism is going to disappear literally overnight from the face of our planet. Humanity is going to march forward to the building of an enlightened socialist society where people for the first time can really live together on this planet in peace and in security and with freedom. Humanity will finally realize the type of rewarding life that human intelligence is so abundantly capable of making, even at the present level of technological development. Once humanity learns how to conduct itself politically, organizationally, and socially, it can take advantage of these wonders.

That's what we dedicate our lives to. We of the party, we revolutionaries in the United States—acting as best we can



Photos courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society
Farmer-Labor Party governor Floyd Olson imposed martial law July 26, 1934, and called out 4,000 National Guardsmen against the Teamster-organized strike in Minneapolis. The troops raided the strike headquarters and arrested Local 574 leader Ray Dunne (bottom) on August 1 of that year. The National Guard raided other union offices as well, including those of the American Federation of Labor (top).

in solidarity with revolutionary fighters across the world—must always keep in mind that in the last analysis the fate of humanity rests on the socialist revolution in the United States. Our task is to build a party capable of leading that revolution, going up against the most heinous of

the reactionary, monstrous ruling class regimes that exist on the face of this planet: the imperialist ruling class of the United States.

The road ahead in that struggle is going to be strewn with obstacles, and

Continued on Page 8



Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

Local 574 launched Women's Auxiliary. One of its tasks was running a commissary at strike headquarters (above).

combat, including Dobbs himself, would be indicted on conspiracy and sedition charges, convicted, and sent to prison by federal prosecutors making the first use of the soon-to-become-infamous Smith "Gag" Act—an earlier ruling-class application of "homeland security."

It was as a party man, especially shouldering responsibility as a national officer of the Socialist Workers Party for almost three decades, the majority of that time as national secretary, that Dobbs made his greatest leadership contributions—setting an example of working-class integrity from prison during World War II; charting an unwavering communist course for party cadres in the unions and in political action through the postwar witch hunt; encouraging by word and deed the communist and labor movements to join in the mass proletarian fight for Black rights; helping lead the party in responding to and embracing the Cuban Revolution as its own; collaborating in mapping a military policy for the proletariat carried out by young socialists within the broad movement opposing U.S. imperialism's war in Vietnam; and actively pursuing the recruitment of a new generation of cadres that grew out of these momentous world political events.

Dobbs helped lead the communist movement through the retreat and decline of the labor movement from the late 1940s through the mid-1970s. He gave unstinting support

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by Farrell Dobbs

The 1934 strikes that built the union movement in Minneapolis and helped pave the way for the CIO, recounted by a central leader of that battle. The first in a four-volume series on the class-struggle leadership of the strikes and organizing drives that transformed the Teamsters union in much of the Midwest into a fighting social movement and pointed the road toward independent labor political action. \$19

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"The American workers," Dobbs concludes, "must learn to act politically and to think socially if they are to attain the class consciousness and solidarity needed to defeat the exploiters." Each volume \$18.95

Order online from www.pathfinderpress.com or from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.



‘Rebelión Teamster’

Continued from page 7

there are going to be many pitfalls. There’s no roadmap, no way you can find some kind of a detailed handbook that’s going to tell you what to do at each juncture. Our task is to chart a revolutionary course, based on a fundamental understanding of our program—a basic feel of our revolutionary strategy—and to hammer out the tactics in that direction as we go along.

There’s no timetable. Nobody can say how long it’s going to take or when it’s going to happen. I personally feel that those of you sitting in this room today, who have got all your youth going for you, have got at least Damon Runyon’s six-to-five chance of seeing that explosion.

But in saying so I want to add immediately: *don’t make that a condition. Don’t adopt the criterion that the revolutionary change must happen in your time.* Don’t take as a guide to your active life that narrow, provincial, self-centered notion that if it doesn’t happen during the time of your own subjective existence on this planet, it’s not important.

Always remember that history is magnificently indifferent to the problems of the individual. History doesn’t care whether you die at six or live to be seven hundred, if that were possible, or what happens during your particular lifetime. As the German poet Goethe once said, “History marches like a drunken beggar on horseback.”

A lot can happen during your limited lifespan, or you can live a dull existence. Some people have had a good fortune to live more in a year than others at a

different historical juncture could live in their whole lifetime. Or, as Plekhanov once put it, “If it hadn’t been for the French Revolution, Napoleon would probably have ended up as a corporal in the French artillery.”

Don’t make it a condition that the socialist revolution must come in your lifetime. Be not only a citizen of the planet; be a citizen of time. Recognize that what is fundamental is to be in rapport with the human race from the dawn of history on to the heights that we can only vaguely begin to dream of.

And what’s the alternative? The alternative is to make a compromise with this rotten capitalist system. Do you know what people who do that are like? You remember the movie, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*? Jabez Stone, you know, sold his soul to Scratch, the devil. He did so on the promise that his personal ambitions would thus be served. Later he regretted the action and asked to have his soul returned. Scratch, who was played by Walter Huston, that magnificent actor, finally said all right, he’d give it back.

So Scratch took a small matchbox from his pocket. He opened the box and began poking around in it with his stubby finger trying, and trying, to find the mean little soul of Jabez Stone so he could give it back.

That’s symbolic of what you do to your own soul if you make a compromise with this rotten system.

Our job is to build a movement of men and women who emulate the seasoned fighters of the Continental line in the first American Revolution. Learn to be professional revolutionary fighters. Don’t be summer soldiers. Don’t dawdle; don’t vacillate. Put nothing above the considerations of the movement. Maintain your place in the front ranks of the revolutionary fighters, and stand in that place for the duration.

There is no other way in which you can find so rich, so rewarding, so fruitful, and so purposeful a life.

* * *

Farrell Dobbs would have toasted the translation into Spanish and publication of *Rebelión Teamster* with great pleasure. Above all he would have relished the story of young, fighting miners in Utah listening to a sight trans-



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Farrell Dobbs (center) and 17 other SWP and Teamsters union leaders convicted of “sedition” on their way to federal prison, December 1943. To right of Dobbs, front, are Carl Skoglund, Oscar Coover, James P. Cannon (with face partly hidden), and V. R. Dunne.

lation page by page during a long night in their picket shack. That would have struck a familiar chord.

He often pointed out how difficult it was in the 1930s, when he started searching for political answers, to find even one book that gave him the kind of historical perspective he was thirsting for, how he scoured the public libraries looking for something, anything. And he described the lightning-bolt impact on him of the first Marxist books and pamphlets he was given to read by cadres of the Communist League of America who recruited him, revolutionists like Vincent Ray Dunne, known as V.R., and Carl Skoglund, affectionately called Skogie by all his friends and comrades.

At that time, many fewer of the classics of Marxism had been translated into English, and those that had been published were hard to come by. This was true not only of the works of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, and Leon Trotsky, but also those of leaders of the communist movement in the United States. During the frequent, long hours of driving that were part of the over-the-road campaign, Dobbs was often accompanied by Skogie, who had become a trustee of Local 544 and

later its president, an “illegal” immigrant from Sweden under deportation orders on the day he died in 1960! One of the most widely respected leaders of both the union and the Communist League of America, Skogie was fluent not only in English and Swedish but also in German—the first language of Marx and Engels, the language of outstanding revolutionists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and the political language of Lenin, Trotsky, and other leaders of the early Communist International. Over decades Skogie had accumulated a sizeable Marxist library, one that he put to use. As they drove the roads on union organizing assignments, Skogie would often read to Farrell—sometimes from English translations, sometimes sight translating from the German as they went along—giving Farrell access to works of Marxism he so eagerly sought.

A worthy celebration of this first-ever publication of *Rebelión Teamster* would be the completion of this effort—the translation of the other three volumes that make up the Teamster series, plus a good start on *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the U.S.*—by 2009, the ninetieth anniversary of the founding in this country of Farrell’s movement, the communist movement.

* * *

Teamster Rebellion is not a “manual” or a handbook. It is the record of a concrete experience in the class struggle—one that can be studied and absorbed by class-conscious workers and farmers who find themselves in the midst of other struggles, at other times, in other conditions, speaking many different languages.

In a new century, increasingly marked by looming economic catastrophe, and an accelerating drive toward bloody wars unleashed by the final imperialist power attempting to extend its life, the concrete experiences of the men and women of Local 574 will prove ever more current and valuable. In a world where vanguard workers and farmers, and youth attracted to their struggles, are daily seeking and extending the solidarity of fellow combatants, *Teamster Rebellion* will be read in a growing number of picket shacks in mountains and prairies, in the middle of large cities and small towns, and translated into other languages, too, across the Americas and beyond.

Teamster Rebellion is dedicated “To the men and women who gave me unshakable confidence in the working class, the rank and file of General Drivers Local 574.” It is their story, the record of what they were able to achieve when they could count on the leadership they deserved.

Today, those seeking to emulate the commitment and seriousness of the Teamster vanguard of 1934 will read it in anticipation of both present and future battles. Through it they will come to understand the truth that lies at the heart of the Communist Manifesto—communism is not a set of ideas, but the constantly renewed generalization of the line of march of a class fighting for its emancipation. And they will join that line of march, becoming a more and more conscious, and more and more battle-savvy part of its vanguard.

December 2003



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Farrell Dobbs at 1972 meeting to celebrate publication of *Teamster Rebellion*.

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Tell it to the bosses—“The Salvation Army is predicting a loss of more than half a million



Harry Ring

dollars in its red kettle fund-raising campaign because potential donors refuse to cross picket lines at grocery stores, which are the primary sites for donations, officials said.”—*Los Angeles Times*.

May top thieves freeze in hell—In the Denver, Colorado, area, 237,930 energy customers have been unable to pay their utilities and heating bills for this October. With winter, they’re staring at \$170 a month bills from Xcel Energy. The *Denver Post* offers a lucid explanation: “The culprits: An April natural gas price hike, and the lackluster[!] economy.”

Ingenious, but not big-time—In Texas, *la migra* cops confiscated 750 pounds of Mexican bologna crossing the border. It was artfully arranged in the shape of a car seat in the cab of a pickup truck and covered with blankets.

P.S.—A Customs agent piously noted the health risk of running unrefrigerated meat across the border. We have no data, but we do wonder about the scope of the unsafe food and drugs banned in the U.S. and shipped to other countries.

Not very ‘ancient history’—TV journalist Hal Walker has died at 70. He was among the first Black TV newscasters, breaking the color ban at CBS in the 1960s. From there he went on to ABC.

Corporate crumbs—An \$18 million New York duplex, owned by Tyco International, was used by recent chief exec Dennis Kozlowski when he was in town. He’s now on

trial for larceny. The Tyco apartment is a bit startling—a dozen paintings featuring a Renoir and a Monet, an alleged \$6,000 shower curtain in the maid’s room, a \$15,000 umbrella stand, and a \$2,200 wastebasket. Our question: How much sweat was needed to have that kind of cash—and a lot more—floating around? Specifically, the sweat of Tyco employees?

And next season?—“State’s data show that this season’s blazes were most destructive on record.”—Headline, *Los Angeles Times*.

Lacks attitude—“Younger workers don’t save enough,” a headline declared. In Chicago,

Jeff Hinrich 28, figures he’ll be 40 before he could start saving for retirement. He’s paying off \$30,000 in college debts and a \$30,000 hospital bill. He observed, “It’s hard to save for retirement unless you’re Bill Gates.”

Not with the program?—“PUERTO RICO—A coalition of 40 unions, religious and community groups asked for Puerto Rican troops to be brought home from war duty in Iraq. The group said it would aid any troops returning home on leave who ‘decide in conscience not to return’ to Iraq. The coalition plans a gathering of soldiers’ relatives Dec. 7 to organize”—*USA Today*, November 28.

Utah miners build rally

Continued from front page

Co-Op miners are preparing to host more than a couple of hundred supporters for this solidarity activity. Taking place three months after their battle began, the rally will mark the miners’ determination to fight to get their jobs back, establish safety on the job, and win union recognition.

The 75 coal miners are involved in an unfair labor practice strike against CW Mining, also known as Co-Op, for illegally being fired September 22, after they protested the unjust suspension of a co-worker. They have the backing of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

At the 8-578 union meeting, the miners were greeted with loud and warm applause when they read a letter from their leadership committee to the PACE local. “On behalf of all the miners on strike at Co-Op, we thank you for all the support you have given us,” the letter said. “We thank you for the generous financial donations of more than \$2,000 from all the PACE locals and members and also for the turkeys and food coupons you donated for Thanksgiving. We wish you good luck in your contract fight. We’re with you and just like you’ve given us encouragement so we can win, we also want to encourage you to do the same. And remember the saying: ‘An injury to one is an injury to all.’ *Esten firmes y no den un paso atras* [stay strong and never take a step back]. In solidarity, United Co-Op Miners.”

Before heading back to Huntington, the Co-Op miners addressed another PACE local where they received \$200 toward Christmas gifts for their children and more \$25 food coupons for their families. The miners also arranged an extended interview for the following week at KRCL Radio. They also received 70 certificates of \$30 each from the Utah AFL-CIO to pay for shoes for their children.

The coal strikers are working together with the Co-Op Miners Solidarity Committee in Salt Lake City—a coalition of labor, religious, and student organizations that actively supports the miners on strike—in these projects.

“We are getting ready to host about 200 people from all over to come join us at the picket line and later for a dinner and rally at the local public school,” Ana María Sánchez, a female Co-Op miner, said in a December 5 interview in Huntington. “Our supporters in Salt Lake are driving down in a 57-seat charter bus, cars, and pick-up trucks along with food donations and clothes. This caravan will drive in to the mountain canyon where our picket line is situated. We

want to show the Co-Op bosses a show of force that day. I can hardly wait.”

The workers at Co-Op, most of whom were born in Mexico, have turned to and won the backing of the UMWA as they have drawn the line against the bosses’ push to operate the mine under increasingly dangerous conditions, with a pay scale of \$5.25 to \$7.00 an hour.

The working conditions imposed by the bosses at Co-Op were responsible for three deaths in the last half of the 1990s—half of the total coal mine deaths in Utah. An October 6 UMWA press release noted that as miners were taking steps to organize a union, they were fired en masse after they protested the arbitrary dismissal of one of their co-workers.

“The Co-Op workers struck the mine on Sept. 22 after management—controlled by the Kingston family—had suspended one of their co-workers,” said the statement, “for refusing to sign a disciplinary warning the week before. It was the company’s third attempt to victimize a UMWA supporter in recent weeks.”

The Co-Op mine is part of the Kingstons’ \$150 million business empire that stretches across six western states. This clan is widely hated among working people in the region not only for its vicious antilabor practices, but also for its record of convictions of several of its members for abuse of young women in the family who have been forced into polygamous marriages with relatives and beaten when trying to escape.

The Co-Op strikers have already won solidarity from other miners in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico; and from PACE members and other trade unionists, as well as students, immigrant rights organizations, and church and community groups in the Salt Lake City area. Solidarity has begun to spread in other parts of the country, as the facts of their struggle are becoming more widely known. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 271 members in Omaha, Nebraska, for example, recently organized plant-gate collections at the Swift meatpacking plant there for the miners’ strike fund. The December 13 rally is designed to broaden this support.

“We’ve set up committees to organize that day’s events,” said Juan Salazar, another Co-Op miner. “Two people have already vol-



Striking Co-Op miners, students, and other supporters of miners’ battle for a union picket store owned by the Kingstons—the Co-Op mine owners—November 29 in Salt Lake City.

unteered to head up the food and another the publicity work. The miners are inviting speakers from organizations that have supported us all along.”

At a general meeting of all the miners, Sánchez also announced an International Human Rights Day event at the Salt Lake City Public Library on December 10, where a representative of the Co-Op miners is invited to speak. “A lot of us need to be there,” she said. “We’ll have a table with information about our fight. We’ll pass out

a leaflet to build the December 13 rally. The organizers of that day’s event will announce our rally and encourage people to sign up for the caravan.”

Sánchez and others pointed out that in addition to participation in the December 13 solidarity action, supporters of the embattled miners can help with funds. Financial donations to the Co-Op miners’ struggle can be sent to: 525 S. 1st St., Price, UT 84501. They should be earmarked for the “Co-Op Miners Relief Fund.”

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



December 22, 1978

A little more than a year ago, President Carter received Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi at the White House and praised him for maintaining a “strong, stable, and progressive Iran.”

Even as late as this June, *New York Times* correspondent Nicholas Gage insisted in a major article that peasants and workers in Iran backed the shah, who “has taken great care to build both elements into pillars of support for this regime.”

But now the American ruling class has been forced to change its tune. One Wall Street analyst told the *Christian Science Monitor*’s financial correspondent, “The [stock] market is beginning to accept that the Shah cannot survive.”

Just how dim the shah’s prospects are was indicated by the enormous demonstrations of December 10 and 11. Opposition leaders asserted that 7 million protesters—one fifth of the country’s population—marched in opposition to the regime on December 10.

CBS News estimated that 1.5 million marched in Tehran alone. “The sheer weight of numbers of the procession took even seasoned observers by surprise,” Tony Al-laway reported in the December 11 *Monitor*. “More than a quarter of Tehran’s population had turned out to register their protest.”



December 21, 1953

SAN FRANCISCO—Six thousand longshoremen “hit the bricks” last week December 3, when Velde’s House Un-American Committee opened a red-baiting attack against their union. Local 10, of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (independent) had served notice to Velde when he arrived in town that it would not tolerate witch-hunt attacks on the union.

Velde, an ex-FBI cop, and now one of the wheel horses in McCarthy’s witch-hunt stable, started his hearings December 1. The hearing was preceded by the usual press build-up designed to create panic and fear. Velde announced his committee was “deeply concerned with the red menace” in the Bay area.

When Velde, after some preliminary sparring, cautiously opened the smear attack on the ILWU through the voice of a stoolpigeon witness, the union acted without hesitation. It paralyzed the waterfront in a 24-hour protest strike.

Velde ended the hearings on the fifth, instead of on the announced eleventh day. He talked of returning to Washington for “urgent Congressional duties.” The committee left with the vague threat to “return again sometime in the future.”

JOIN THE CO-OP MINERS’ PICKET LINE AND RALLY



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

PICKET LINE: 12:00 noon at the entrance of Co-Op mine

RALLY: 2:00 p.m. at Huntington’s Canyon View Jr. High School Gym, 550 North 400 West (next to Highway 31)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (435) 637-9899 (ENGLISH) OR (435) 687-5632 (EN ESPAÑOL)

Justice for the Vieques 12!

The sentencing of the Vieques 12 by a U.S. court in Puerto Rico is an outrage that should be protested loudly. Framed up on charges ranging from trespassing to destruction of federal property, their only crime was being part of a celebration on Vieques on May 1. That day the U.S. Navy finally left that Puerto Rican island, where for six decades they had conducted bombing and other military exercises—a victory won through a tenacious struggle by fishermen and other working people in Puerto Rico and their supporters worldwide.

The reason the U.S. authorities targeted these 12 is that the expulsion of the U.S. military from Vieques is a “bad” example to others around the world because it shows it’s possible to stand up to U.S. imperialism and win.

The fight to demand justice for the Vieques defendants is tied to the ongoing campaign for the release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners. Five independence fighters—Haydée Beltrán, Antonio

Camacho, Oscar López, Juan Segarra Palmer, and Carlos Alberto Torres—are among the longest-held political prisoners in the world.

The successful struggle against the U.S. Navy in Vieques and the effort to free the Puerto Rican political prisoners are part of a broader fight—to end U.S. colonial rule over Puerto Rico. These struggles are completely in the interests of working people of the United States, who share with the Puerto Rican people a common oppressor: the U.S. billionaire minority and its government in Washington. Every move to victimize Puerto Rican anticolonial fighters—from FBI spying to the use of grand juries—will reinforce efforts by the U.S. employers to trample on the rights of workers and farmers in the United States.

Reverse the convictions of the Vieques 12!
Grant Oscar López medical treatment!
Free all the Puerto Rican political prisoners now!

NATO’s role in Afghanistan

Continued from Page 4

land, and Sweden opposed a clause, modeled on a NATO statute, that would oblige all EU members to provide military support to any EU state under attack. British foreign minister Jack Straw said he understood the concerns about this proposal.

The French and German governments, meanwhile, are expected to stand firm on steps toward an EU military arm of the kind that irks Washington. “Substantial progress has been made in finding a form of words to describe the setting up of a European military operational cell,” said an article in the December 9 *Financial Times*. “But France still wants such a cell to be the basis of a future command and planning headquarters running EU defense operations in cooperation with NATO but independent of it.”

The same day, two U.S. government officials briefed Washington’s allies in NATO on Pentagon plans to close or scale down many of the permanent U.S. bases established after World War II in Germany and other NATO countries and shift the troops instead to smaller and more agile military centers in the Balkans, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

“The cold war is over, we face new threats,” said Marc Grossman, a U.S. undersecretary of state, according to the December 9 *International Herald Tribune*. “We need to make sure that our force posture and the posture of NATO and our allies is aligned in such a way to meet these new threats.”

Grossman and Douglas Feith, a U.S. undersecretary of defense, told reporters they were due to split up for visits to Germany, France, Britain, Turkey, Russia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, and Iceland. “The inclusion of Poland and Romania and Bulgaria was significant,” the *Tribune* said. “All have been mentioned as possible hosts of new American bases.” Many U.S. troops and bases may be shifted to these countries from Germany, which has been host to 80,000 of the 116,000 U.S. troops in Europe.

Tokyo pushes for troops in Iraq

At the same time, in a major step by Japanese imperialism to begin to deploy its military forces abroad, the Japanese cabinet voted December 9 to send up to 1,000 “noncombat” troops to Iraq. The controversial move had twice before been put on hold.

Japan has one of world’s largest and most modern armed forces—termed a “self-defense force”—but since its defeat by Washington in World War II, it has been barred under a U.S.-imposed constitution from using military forces abroad.

The debate flared anew after two Japanese diplomats were killed in Iraq last month by forces opposed to the U.S.-led occupation.

Tokyo staged a state funeral for the two diplomats December 6. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi used the patriotic speeches and displays of Japanese flags to press his argument for sending troops to Iraq. “Japan’s spirit is being tested,” Koizumi said. “We are no longer in a situation where we can only pay money. We must perform our utmost.” Earlier this year, Tokyo pledged \$5 billion in financial backing for the imperialist occupation force.

While the Japanese unit is supposed to be on a “humanitarian” mission in Iraq, the heavily armed troops are authorized to engage in combat for “self-defense.”

In Iraq, Washington has moved to set up a “war crimes” tribunal to organize trials against former officials of the Saddam Hussein regime. Seeking to tap the deep hatred among many Iraqis for the former party-police state, U.S. officials plan to use the tribunals to try figures such as Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as “Chemical Ali” for his alleged role in chemical attacks on Kurds in the 1980s, and Muhammad Hamza al-Zubaydi, a leader of the regime’s bloody

suppression of a Shiite Muslim revolt in southern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War.

To win more popular support for such a tribunal, the imperialist occupation forces plan to use Iraqi judges. This is in contrast with “war crimes” trials such as the UN tribunal targeting former Yugoslav government officials, which Washington has used to justify its 1999 war against Yugoslavia

In a string of continuing attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq, two bombs targeted U.S. military convoys in Baghdad December 5, the day before U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld made an unannounced visit to Iraq. In one of the bombings, in a crowded market, one U.S. soldier and four Iraqis were reportedly killed and 16 Iraqis were wounded. Most of those injured were passengers in a passing bus, an AP dispatch reported.

The attacks sparked expressions of anger from some of the local residents. “I don’t understand why they do it. They know there’s a Friday market here and there are a lot of people,” cake shop owner Abdul Wahad Allwan said, according to an article in the *Khaleej Times*. “They hurt one American but they killed and wounded far more Iraqis,” stated Ahmed Ali, a sweets seller in the market.

The next day, a funeral in the Sunni Muslim town of Samarra for two Iraqis killed in a firefight with U.S. troops led to a clash, with mourners killing an Iraqi security official and chanting pro-Saddam slogans over his body. When members of the U.S.-led Iraqi Civil Defense Corps ordered some of those at the funeral to stop firing weapons in the air as is traditional, some mourners reportedly fired at the paramilitary forces, fatally shooting a guard and setting their truck on fire. Dozens of people chanted, “Long live Saddam! Death to the traitors!” reported AP correspondent Sameer Yacoub. The funeral was for two people who had been killed November 30 when armed attackers engaged a contingent of 100 U.S. troops in a firefight. The U.S. forces unleashed their devastating firepower, leaving numerous civilians dead and wounded and sparking widespread anger.

Samarra is in an area north of Baghdad sometimes referred to as the “Sunni Triangle,” where the Baathist party-government apparatus, which combined patronage and terror during its decades of rule, had its strongest base. Much of the armed resistance to the U.S.-led occupation has been in this region. Little armed opposition has taken place in the largely Shiite south or among the Kurds in the north.

New Baath Party minus Hussein?

According to the December 4 *Financial Times*, “Iraqi officials and political parties say former Ba’athist leaders who had fallen out with Saddam Hussein in the past are looking at setting up a political party under a new name and are letting it be known that they have excluded Mr. Hussein from the new movement.” Such a move, however, is expected to meet with hostility from U.S. forces. The occupiers have been waging a “de-Baathification” campaign to eliminate the top ranks of Baath Party officials from the administration. This campaign affects tens of thousands, especially Sunnis, who tended to dominate such jobs under Hussein. The purges have caused resentment among some in the Sunni population.

Some Iraqi groups that are part of the U.S.-backed “interim” government have argued that the existence of such an organization would help undercut the military resistance by former Baathist elements. “If we are for a real democracy as they [Washington] say, this means the field should be open to all parties,” said Jassem Essawi, spokesperson for the National Unity Movement, a Sunni Islamist political group that appears to have a measure of support. “The Iraqi street should judge whether a new Ba’ath is acceptable.”

What’s the nature of Iraqi resistance?

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Several readers whose letters appear on the opposite page have asked questions or expressed disagreements with the *Militant’s* explanation of political conditions in Iraq today. These letters offer a welcome opportunity to discuss further and clarify what’s involved.

One of the main questions raised in each letter, explicitly or implicitly, is about the nature of those carrying out armed attacks on the U.S.-led occupation forces. It’s hard to get a straight answer by relying on accounts in the largely liberal media, from the *New York Times* to the British *Guardian* to Pacifica radio—whose views are echoed by most radical groups that organize antiwar actions. They are more interested in boosting Democratic opponents of President George Bush than in telling the truth.

U.S. imperialism scored an easy victory in its quick invasion of Iraq. The Saddam Hussein regime, a capitalist gang feared and hated by millions of workers and farmers in Iraq, handed Washington a golden opportunity. The U.S. rulers won broad acceptance at home for launching an assault on the Iraqi people aimed at strengthening their position relative to Berlin, Paris, and other imperialist rivals and preparing further wars of plunder—all in the name of democracy.

REPLY TO A READER

The Iraqi people were left open to this attack by the crimes committed against them by Hussein’s party-police state—especially since the “socialist” Baathist party beheaded the vanguard of Iraq’s 1958 democratic revolution following a 1963 counterrevolutionary coup. By a combination of police-state terror, patronage, and national and religious divisions, the regime had virtually driven working people out of politics over four decades. Stalinist betrayals at home and abroad allowed the Baathist dictatorship to come to power in Iraq and created a void filled today in other Mideast countries by bourgeois nationalist groups—like Hezbollah—that offer a dead end to working people and have nothing in common with popular liberation movements.

With these political conditions as a contributing factor, Washington finds it necessary and possible to impose a “soft” protectorate in Iraq today rather than a military dictatorship that ruthlessly crushes all “unauthorized” activities. For example, allowing the publication of the Iraqi Communist Party’s paper (which backed the imperialist invasion) creates conditions—political space—that some opponents of the occupation can and will take advantage of.

Liberal and radical critics of the Bush administration have made many predictions. Prior to the invasion they claimed that large peace demonstrations—or the United Nations, or the “peaceful” imperialist hyenas in Paris and Berlin—would stop Washington from going to war. When the Anglo-American armies launched the war anyway and the pacifist rallies collapsed, they predicted massive resistance and a “quagmire” for the U.S. troops. They claimed Washington was going to inflict huge civilian casualties. These claims proved false as the regime collapsed like dry rot and the invaders easily took Baghdad while avoiding a bloodbath or the total devastation of Iraq’s infrastructure.

Today, similar voices assert that there is massive popular resistance to the occupation. The burden of proof, however, is on them. Tariq Ali, a prominent radical academic in the United Kingdom, for example, asserted in a December 4 radio debate in New York with pro-occupation commentator Christopher Hitchens that the imperialist occupation is an unqualified failure, that there are “great, growing armies” of Iraqis joining the armed opposition, and that “what we’re seeing in Iraq is classic first-stage guerrilla warfare.” Ali, however, has no facts to back up these claims. What does “classic” refer to? To the popular liberation movement that successfully fought the French and U.S. imperialist armies in Vietnam, or the mass struggle led by the National Liberation Front in Algeria that defeated French colonial rule? The remaining forces loyal to the former Baathist regime have not an iota in common with these popular anti-imperialist movements. They are hated by the big majority of Iraqi people—and are incapable of waging a fight against imperialism, as they proved when they were in power.

Revolutionists in Iraq today would not call for a victory by the pro-Saddam thugs or for Hussein’s return to power, however unlikely, explaining that it would not be a step forward for working people in Iraq. It is the last thing that millions of Iraqis want, especially the majority of the population that bore the brunt of the former regime’s brutality, the Shiite Muslims and the Kurds. That reality allows the U.S.-led forces to enjoy a certain level of acceptance today, in contrast to countries where working people have been able to resist an imperialist invasion even under unfavorable conditions and misleadership, from Panama in 1989 to Somalia in 1993, to name just two examples.

Is there any substantial resistance beyond these Baathist remnants? Again, the burden of proof is on those making these assertions. One thing is certain, however: Tariq Ali’s claim of “very severe demoralization inside the ranks of the U.S. army” is a fiction. In the U.S. armed forces today, which is made of highly trained volunteers, not draftees, the morale of the ranks will not take big blows until they encounter the kind of terrible casualties inflicted by the workers and peasants of Indochina in the last half of the 20th century.

The stance of class-conscious workers in the United States and other imperialist countries is to demand the unconditional withdrawal of all occupation troops from Iraq to Afghanistan and beyond. The struggle to free Iraq from imperialist domination, however, is not short-term. It can only be carried out by workers and farmers, not by a stand-in for working people. Revolutionists in Iraq today would use the civic space that does exist, however limited, to build organizations that can lead the toilers toward this goal. Developing the necessary leadership will take time and experience and will be influenced above all by developments in the class struggle worldwide. The biggest obstacles facing the imperialist rulers’ aggressive course are world capitalism’s continuing tendency toward financial collapse and, most importantly, the resulting resistance among workers and farmers throughout the world, including in the United States. It is this relationship of forces between the main contending classes—the capitalists and working people—that class-conscious workers must accurately assess and act on.

‘We look forward to another 75 years!’

Casa de las Américas president Luis Miranda salutes ‘Militant’ anniversary

The following are remarks presented by Luis Miranda at the November 21 meeting in New York City celebrating the *Militant’s* 75th anniversary. (See December 15 issue for article on the event.) Miranda is a founder, and president since 1987, of Casa de las Américas, a New York-based group of Cubans who support the Cuban Revolution. Born in Havana, he came to the United States at the age of 20. In the 1950s he became involved in political activity to support the revolutionary struggle led by the July 26 Movement in Cuba. Translation from Spanish is by the *Militant*.

BY LUIS MIRANDA

First, I want to congratulate all the comrades, those here, of course, but most of all those who aren’t here—the ones who launched the *Militant*, who made it possible for this revolutionary paper to publish for 75 years. The beginnings could not have been easy. The *relevo* [relief], as we say in Cuba, is guaranteed another 75 years.

I first came into contact with the paper in the 1950s. When we founded Casa Cuba¹ in 1957 I had heard about the *Militant* from some comrades who belonged to the Julio Antonio Mella Club,² which was founded in the 1930s by collaborators of Mella—they were meeting at 110th Street and 5th Avenue in Manhattan—and to the Spanish Workers Club.³ At that time, the campaign led by Fidel was beginning in the Sierra.⁴ These comrades offered their cooperation with Cuba. We didn’t have a place to meet, but finally got one at 93rd and Columbus in an abandoned synagogue.

These experienced comrades told us that our library had to have the *Militant*. A lot of us younger comrades didn’t know much about it, but many of these comrades had several back issues of the paper. That’s how it began in Casa Cuba. We started with a collection of *Militants*, which was like having a study program. Remember, there was no TV in those days! It gave us very pleasant and educational reading—reading that we hadn’t had before.

Many comrades learned and educated ourselves a lot by reading the *Militant*, and we continued in this way throughout the 1960s and ’70s.

Our confidence in the newspaper in-



Militant/Paul Pederson

Luis Miranda, president of Casa de las Américas, speaks on panel at November 21 meeting in New York City celebrating *Militant’s* 75th anniversary.

creased in the first years of the revolution. At that time, we have to say, some progressive groups in New York — and there weren’t many at the time — even said in their papers that no socialist revolution could happen in Cuba because it was impossible for a socialist revolution to take place in an underdeveloped country. This created a lot of confusion among us. That’s why it is significant to discuss the *Militant*.

In 1961, 1962, and 1963 the *Militant* published a number of articles about the Cuban Revolution, and it helped get rid of a mirage. We Cubans have a saying: “We have a lot

of Andalusian blood!” because we always tend to make ourselves out to be important! But we realized that the Cuban Revolution was being analyzed in the *Militant* by American comrades who had traveled to Cuba, and they were writing articles explaining the firmness of the revolution, explaining its historic place in the world, not just in Latin America, and explaining its socialist trajectory. This was very significant to us. Some organizations were proven wrong and had to later reverse themselves on their positions on Cuba. This may seem like a small thing to you, but it was very important to us.

I want to say something about the past and the present. Many of you may know of Rafael Cancel Miranda,⁵ the Puerto Rican comrade who was in prison. I wanted to mention something about discussions that I had with him. Let me first explain that for 12 years Casa de las Américas had a committee that organized support for the five imprisoned Puerto Rican comrades, including the one involved in the attack on Blair House.

Cancel would always ask for literature and say: “Why don’t you send me the *Militant*?” We would send them a small bundle, but sometimes we would send several at the same time. So they said, “We’re grateful, but it’s better if you can send the bundles *regularly*—because we have a regular one-hour study group for all the prisoners here.”

We now have five of our comrades in prison who are accused of terrorism—right here in this terrorist state. I was just talking to one of them the other day, and he was asking for literature in English. He said, “Miranda, please don’t forget the *Militant*!” I think it’s interesting to note that we’re talking about a 20-year stretch here between one [Cancel Miranda] and the other [the Cuban Five].⁶

And that is what we see with the *Militant*—comrades who still follow the same course. And we have no doubt that in the future you will continue along these

same lines. We look forward to another 75 years!

¹*Casa Cuba* became Casa de las Américas in 1962.

²*Julio Antonio Mella* (1903-29) was a Cuban student leader and became a founder of the Communist Party of Cuba in 1925. He was assassinated by agents of the Cuban dictatorship of Gerardo Machado while in exile in Mexico in 1929. The Julio Antonio Mella Club was founded by Cuban revolutionaries in Harlem in 1931. It was led by a close associate of Mella. In 1928 Mella himself, while in Mexico, had founded the Association of Revolutionary New Cuban Emigrants (ANERC), with chapters in Mexico City and New York City.

³The *Spanish Workers Club* was active in the 1930s and ’40s in New York. It included Spanish Republican émigrés.

⁴*Fidel Castro*, Cuba’s president, led the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army, which waged a successful revolutionary war in the 1950s to overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, starting in the Sierra Maestra mountains of eastern Cuba. The revolution triumphed on Jan. 1, 1959.

⁵*Rafael Cancel Miranda* is a longtime leader of the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. He was one of five Nationalists who spent more than a quarter of a century in U.S. prisons for conducting armed protests in Washington, D.C., against U.S. colonial rule of their country. Between 1954 and 1979 Cancel Miranda was locked up at various federal prisons in the United States. While in prison he read the *Militant* and on a few occasions contributed articles and letters to the paper. Cancel Miranda and other Nationalist heroes were freed in 1979 as a result of a years-long international defense campaign.

⁶The *Cuban Five*—Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Ramón Labañino—are Cuban revolutionaries serving draconian sentences in U.S. prisons ranging from 15 years to a double life term after their conviction by a federal court in Miami in June 2001 on frame-up charges brought by the U.S. government, which included conspiracy to commit espionage and, in one case, conspiracy to commit murder. The five men had been in Florida on an internationalist mission to gather information on Cuban counterrevolutionary groups with a long record of violent acts against Cuba carried out from U.S. soil with Washington’s knowledge and complicity.

LETTERS

Iraqi resistance I

I agree with the *Militant* that no national liberation movement exists in Iraq. Reports do continue to surface that variegated anti-Saddam Hussein Baathist elements form part of the loose resistance—dominated by remnant Hussein loyalists. Scattered reports continue of increasing support from a segment of the disaffected masses that originally welcomed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. If true, it further debunks the U.S.-led imperialist international forces label of terrorists given to Iraqi resistance.

Ken Morgan
Baltimore, Maryland

Iraqi resistance II

I’d like to thank the *Militant* for its response to Richard Young’s letter in the December 8 issue. However, I feel the response does not go far enough and is still vague and lacking in sources in regards to the character of the Iraqi resistance.

While I am in agreement with the *Militant* in that the current resistance in Iraq is not on par with historically speaking the National Liberation Front of Vietnam, I believe it is an error to go completely the other way in labeling the resistance as simply the remnants of the Baathist Party as the bourgeois media and U.S. government continually state. Who really knows who these fighters are? Does the *Militant* have strong sources that

show that the resistance is just remnants of the Baathist Party? As the saying goes, “the readers want to know.”

Again, I agree with the *Militant* in that all continuity of working-class leadership in Iraq and most of the Middle East has been disrupted by decades of Stalinist betrayal making the path to a workers and farmers government all the more difficult. Though, this does not give the workers and farmers of Iraq a break from the task at hand—freeing their country from imperialist military occupation. The response to Young’s letter ends with a quote from a November 17 editorial, “Revolutionists in Iraq today would fight for Iraqi sovereignty, which the U.S. armed forces prevent. At the same time, they would be opposed to the return of the Baathist regime. They would use whatever civic space exists to build and consolidate a revolutionary organization that could lead working people there down the road to get rid of the U.S. troops and keep the United Nations out as well.”

Well, yes that’s a good Marxist response for the need to build a Leninist combat party, the type of party that’s needed in Iraq today. In other words a good opening line. But has the art of the polemic been lost? People are fighting and dying in Iraq. What kind of civic space exists in Iraq to build such a party? We need more in-depth answers that maybe are unanswer-

able at this moment being just eight months since the start of the war. This should be stated then. Of course the answer to really helping the people of Iraq is building revolutionary parties in each of our respective countries.

Tom Alter
via e-mail

Iraqi resistance III

In your reply to Richard Young on the character of the “war on terror” and of the resistance in Iraq, you remarked that there is a political void that exists right now in Iraq. The Iraqi masses face a situation where there is no revolutionary leadership that can accomplish the historic task of liberating that country from the claws of the imperialist powers. However, the brutal character of the imperialist occupation that the *Militant* has depicted in many articles so far, and the open arrogance of the invaders, leave no choice to the people of Iraq and pushes them objectively towards the formation of a revolutionary psychology.

In brief, the formation of a revolutionary organization to liberate Iraq is already under way and being accomplished by the imperialists themselves. Do you think that due to that explosive situation there can be any prospect in the coming years of a revolutionary transformation of the political organizations of the nationalist bourgeoisie of Is-

lamic reference, like the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, or the Hezbollah? I don’t see any other prospect for the liberation of Iraq in the short term.

If you don’t see any such prospect can you clarify the nature of these parties? What would prevent them from accomplishing the national liberation of Iraq given the swing forward of a massive radicalization of the people?

Because just like the Chinese Revolution, many revolutions were accomplished by the pressure of the workers and the peasants despite and without a proper revolutionary leadership. This also touches another question, that of the political psychology of the Iraqi people: what is the state of mind of the workers and peasants of Iraq? Are they too weakened right now for political action? Do you think they need time to gather their energies before speaking of the national liberation of Iraq?

S.D. Fasfalis
Montreal, Quebec

Occupation of Iraq

In a reply to a reader in the April 28 issue, Argiris Malapanis wrote, “In a war between an imperialist power and a nation oppressed by imperialism, class-conscious workers always side with the oppressed nation—regardless of its political regime—and argue that the defeat of the imperialists in the

war is in the interests of working people everywhere.” Today, U.S. and allied forces are carrying out a military assault “aimed at destroying remnants of the Saddam Hussein regime and others resisting the occupation” (December 1 *Militant*). In today’s context, how does the principle expressed by the *Militant* in April apply? Around what slogans can it be concretized?

John Riddell
Toronto, Ontario

Travel ban to Cuba

In the December 1 issue, the article “U.S. gov’t to begin trials of Cuba travelers” refers to a bill in Congress “that would have ended” the U.S. travel ban to Cuba. This is incorrect. The bill would have eliminated funding for enforcement of the travel ban, a totally meaningless action since the administration would simply have shifted funds from elsewhere. As far as I know, no member of the House or Senate has introduced a bill directly attacking the travel ban.

Arnold Weissberg
Havana, Cuba

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Mexico rally: ‘No tax hike, privatizations’

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

More than 100,000 unionists, farmers, and other demonstrators from around the country jammed downtown Mexico City November 27 in a “National March for the Defense of Sovereignty.” They protested proposals by the government of President Vicente Fox that would open up the electrical industry and other state-owned companies to foreign capitalist investment and that would extend a regressive value-added tax (VAT). Mexican press reports said it was the largest antigovernment mobilization in years. Smaller marches took place in Guadalajara and several other cities.

The demonstration was called by the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) and a number of other labor organizations including the National Workers Union (UNT), led by the telephone workers union. It was joined by large contingents of farmers who came into Mexico’s capital from rural areas around the country. Former Mexico City mayor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, a leader of the bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), led one of the contingents.

In addition to the visible presence of electrical workers, groups of flight attendants, auto workers at Volkswagen, nurses, transit workers, teachers, and other unionists took part in the march.

The largest union federation, the Mexican Workers Federation (CTM), which is tied to the Institutional Revolutionary

Party (PRI), the capitalist party that dominated Mexico’s government for decades, did not support the action. The PRI’s grip on the presidency ended in 2000 with the election of Fox of the National Action Party (PAN).

One huge banner carried by demonstrators read, “In defense of the national patrimony, let’s reject privatizations.” Another prominent banner, at the head of a contingent of unions and political organizations, said, “No to privatization, VAT, and imperialism.” “Fox, the homeland is not for sale,” read yet another sign.

In a show of force, the government mobilized 7,000 cops, flying police helicopters overhead all day.

The outpouring of protest was fueled by the economic crisis in Mexico, which has been aggravated by government measures that further shift the burden of this crisis onto working people. Despite Fox’s electoral promises three years ago



Reuters/Andrew Winning

More than 100,000 unionists, farmers, and others marched in Mexico City November 27 against moves by the government of Vicente Fox to privatize state-owned industries and raise sales tax.

to improve conditions, unemployment in Mexico today is near six-year highs. The country has not recovered from a recession in 2001. Last year economic growth was an anemic 0.9 percent, and the peso

has dropped sharply against the dollar.

The much-touted 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has reaped higher profits for U.S. and Canadian capitalists who have gained easier access to markets, investment, and superexploited labor in Mexico. But it has not improved conditions for working people. The Fox government is pressing for economic “reforms” that it says are necessary to increase Mexico’s “competitiveness” in the world, especially with countries like China that are seeking U.S. investment and markets. Big-business commentators argue that, despite the supposed benefits of greater access to U.S. markets through NAFTA, Mexico has “high” labor costs and low productivity compared to China.

One of the main measures proposed by the Fox administration is to extend the VAT—a sales tax—to food, medicine, and books, which had previously been exempt.

The other major proposal is to take further steps toward selling off Mexico’s state-owned companies. The crown jewel, of course, is Pemex, the national oil company, which was expropriated from imperialist corporations in 1938 under the pressure of mass mobilizations of working people. Because of this anti-imperialist legacy, however, Mexico’s oil wealth continues to be deeply viewed by workers and farmers as their national patrimony, making the question of its sell-off a politically explosive issue.

As a result, the ruling capitalists—beginning under the previous PRI regimes—have pursued a course of gradual encroachments on the energy industry, such as the proposal to sell off Pemex’s petrochemical plants and open up the electrical industry to capitalist investors.

SME, the electrical workers union, has spearheaded protests against the sell-off of the electrical industry, knowing it may lead to thousands of layoffs and attacks on the union.

In a September 30 statement, SME said it was seeking to mobilize opposition to those who “seek to turn over the energy patrimony of the Mexican people to foreign capital.”

In face of the continuing protests, the two main ruling parties, the PRI and the PAN, have been divided on how to pursue the privatization moves. Fox is relying on the PRI, which is the largest party bloc in Congress, to help pass a package of unpopular economic “reforms.” After the large November 27 demonstration, the PRI ousted congressional leader Elba Gordillo from her leadership post for being too close an ally of Fox. The president’s economic package remains bogged down in Congress.

London-backed parties decline in N. Ireland vote

BY PETE CLIFFORD

EDINBURGH, Scotland—Elections to the Northern Irish Assembly November 26 marked a decline for the two main parties that London has rested on to maintain its rule over this part of Ireland.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) won 30 out of the 108 seats, becoming the biggest party and overtaking the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), which won 27 seats. The DUP opposes the 1998 pact known as the Good Friday Agreement, in which the British government conceded a degree of self government to Northern Ireland. It also refuses to share power with the main nationalist party, Sinn Fein, which has led the fight against British rule and for a united Irish republic.

Sinn Fein won 24 seats, while the reformist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) gained 18 seats, a reversal of their tally in the 1998 elections.

The British capitalist daily the *Financial Times* described the electoral results as an emerging crisis. Commenting on a November 28 meeting between British prime minister Anthony Blair and his counterpart Bartholomew Ahern of the Republic of Ireland, the paper said, “The result was one they least wanted. Mr.

Blair had actually delayed the election in the hope of cementing Mr. Trimble’s position.” David Trimble is a leader of the UUP.

From 1921—when British imperialism partitioned Ireland, maintaining its direct rule in the northern six counties—to 1972, the UUP was the sole governing party in the north. Since then it has remained the main prop of British rule. On the other hand, the DUP, led by Ian Paisley, has combined its opposition to a weakening of London’s rule with backing rightist street actions. The SDLP, which from its formation in 1970 has secured majority electoral support among Irish nationalists, has sought to collaborate with London rather than lead a mass struggle to end its rule.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams said there was “a crisis of unionism that will need some patience for the rest of us to show in the time ahead.” Writing in the lead up to the election in the *Irish News*, Adams had said, “A vote for Sinn Fein is a vote for a new Ireland, a free, united and independent Ireland.” He stressed that nationalists should accept “nothing less than equality and justice.” The Unionists are the parties that support continued British rule.

Sinn Fein continues to campaign centrally on these themes. For example, the November 27 issue of its paper, *An Phoblacht*, protested the slaying a week before of James McMahon, a 21-year-old Catholic, by the rightist Ulster Defence Association in Lisburn. The Catholic population in Northern Ireland has confronted systematic discrimination under British rule.

A November 29 editorial in the right-wing British paper *Daily Telegraph* stated that the rising electoral support for Sinn Fein was a product of the 1998 agreement. “The republicans dominated the political process, winning concessions from the British government over prisoner releases, troop withdrawal.” It complained, “Quite understandably, large numbers of Ulster Catholics, including many middle-class church-goers who abhor terrorism, have reached the view that Sinn Fein is the party that delivers.”

The rise of support to the DUP was, according to the *Telegraph*, part of the same

process: “a substantial protest vote against the agreement by unionists fed up with government concessions to republicans.”

Some press commentators, pointing to these electoral results, argue that London will be forced to change course by the DUP’s success. “Victory for Paisley threatens peace hope” headlined the *Telegraph*, which editorialized, “Time for Plan B in Northern Ireland.”

Other papers showed some caution. An editorial in the *Times* headed “Ulster stalemate” points out that “seven in ten of those who cast ballots backed parties which explicitly endorsed the peace process.”

Much of the big-business press coverage has speculated about the evolving crisis of all the unionist parties. The *Telegraph* points out that the DUP is in fact divided between those who want direct rule from London and those who want to take office in Northern Ireland. Meanwhile, the UUP is divided between its Trimble-led wing, which favors working with the British government on the 1998 agreement, and the wing led by Jeffrey Donaldson, who opposes this.

The *Times* editorial cautioned about this situation, pointing out that further divisions among unionists could mean that Sinn Fein could not only be “the leading body among nationalists, but they will be the leading party willing to do business with Mr. Blair and Mr. Ahern.” It warns, “This would be an extraordinary state of affairs and one that would hardly serve the interests of Ulster’s majority.”

London is holding talks with the main parties in the coming weeks over the future of the Northern Irish Assembly. The British government has suspended the assembly four times since its establishment, and it hasn’t met now for a year.

Ahead of these meetings, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams is demanding London lift its suspension of the assembly. He vowed, “We’re going to press the government to move ahead.”

U.S. national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said she hoped “progress could continue to be made.” Yet without agreement at this stage for the DUP to join with Sinn Fein in government, that maybe wishful thinking for London and its U.S. imperialist ally.

From Pathfinder

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